

Nova Scotia

N.B.-N.S. border remains closed due to protest about isolation requirements

People upset about announcement travellers from N.B. must self-isolate upon arrival

[Elizabeth McMillan](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jun 23, 2021 9:02 AM AT | Last Updated: June 23, 2021



The Trans-Canada Highway at the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick border is shown Wednesday. The border remains closed because of a protest over restrictions announced Tuesday by the Nova Scotia government. (Shane Fowler/CBC)

The main border crossing between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick was closed for around 20 hours, blocked by dozens of protesters demonstrating against restrictions that require most travellers from New Brunswick to self-isolate upon arrival in Nova Scotia.

The protesters include a number with anti-vaccine views. At one point, some briefly tried to stop a tractor-trailer they believed had COVID-19 vaccine, but which RCMP officers at the scene said contained blood products, from being escorted by police across the border into Nova Scotia.

The truck eventually passed through, as did some nurses and doctors trying to get to work at the hospital in Amherst, N.S.

RCMP [eventually broke up the blockade](#) and arrested at least two people just after 8 p.m. AT on Wednesday.

The Nova Scotia government announced Tuesday afternoon that most [travellers from New Brunswick will continue to have to self-isolate upon arrival](#), a decision that came less than 24 hours before Nova Scotia opened its borders with P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador without isolation or testing requirements.

Nova Scotia has for months required most travellers to quarantine for 14 days when they arrive in the province after applying for entry online. People have had to present documentation at the border showing they've been approved for entry.

People travelling from New Brunswick — including Nova Scotians returning from that province — can enter Nova Scotia for any reason, but will have isolation and testing requirements based on their vaccination status. There are exemptions for those travelling for essential health services, work, child custody or veterinary reasons.





RCMP officers stand at the closed Nova Scotia-New Brunswick border on June 23, 2021. Police say some trucks carrying essential goods were allowed through the blockade. (Jonathan Villeneuve/CBC)

New Brunswick had initially been included in Nova Scotia's Wednesday reopening plans for travellers in the Atlantic region, announced little more than a week ago. Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin's last-minute reversal has angered many people in the Maritimes who had eagerly anticipated being able to freely cross the New Brunswick-Nova Scotia border.

- [Some Nova Scotians applaud government's N.B. border restriction](#)
- [Dozens of truckers left waiting in N.B. for border protest to end](#)

Rankin said the decision was prompted by New Brunswick [opening its borders to Canadian travellers](#) from outside the Atlantic region last week without the requirement they self-isolate, provided they have at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. It is the only Atlantic Canadian province to do so.

The premiers of the Atlantic provinces were due to meet Wednesday afternoon, and the border closure will be "the top priority," according to a statement from the P.E.I. government.





Protesters attempt to stop a truck from crossing the N.B.-N.S. border

1 year ago | 0:52

Border protesters try to block a truck they believe is delivering vaccines to Nova Scotia vaccine clinics, as other protesters tell them it is transporting blood to hospitals.

The province said it was concerned about the disruption at the border, which is "an important connecting route for Prince Edward Island and we need that to be open as soon as possible."

In New Brunswick, Premier Blaine Higgs also [called for an end to the blockade](#) and urged people to "not lose sight of the big goal" during a news conference Wednesday afternoon.

"This isn't a time to lose control, or lose patience, or cause disruptions to our friends and neighbours," he said.

- [N.S. to impose modified quarantine rules on N.B. travellers](#)
- [Families say Rankin's last-minute border change 'extremely demoralizing'](#)

In response to Rankin's announcement, people started protesting shortly before 5 p.m. Tuesday. All four lanes at Exit 7 on the Trans-Canada Highway at the Cobequid Pass — about 50 kilometres from the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick border — were closed for the rest of the evening.

That section later reopened, but the border itself was closed before midnight and protesters were gathered there Wednesday. A number of vehicles are blocking the highway, while others are parked along the side. Drivers at the other, less-busy border crossing at Tidnish, N.S., tweeted about long delays there due to protesters.

On the New Brunswick side of the Trans-Canada, RCMP officers were stopping eastbound vehicles just before the exit to Aulac to advise them of the shutdown. Dozens of tractor-trailers were pulled over in Aulac and some had been there since Tuesday night.

The town of Amherst, on the Nova Scotia side of the border, was crammed with waiting tractor-trailers and other vehicles, and officials said there was no more room.

RCMP talking to protesters

RCMP were stationed at the border overnight. CBC's Brett Ruskin estimated there were between 30 and 40 protesters Wednesday morning.

Cpl. Chris Marshall, who speaks for Nova Scotia RCMP, said early Wednesday that beyond blocking the highway, no laws had been broken but a "significant number of people" were protesting on both sides of the border.

He said the force was in the process of bringing in additional resources and planned to continue dialogue with the protesters.



The border was closed just before midnight. Protesters were at the site Wednesday. (Jonathan Villeneuve/Radio-Canada)

"To see if we can't get these folks to essentially, at the very least, even get off the highway so we can reopen it. So we can continue a dialogue with them to determine what it is that they're looking for," Marshall said.

"Unfortunately, it's not a quick process and it's not an easy process. There's a fine line we have to walk where people have a Charter-protected right to protest, to peacefully assemble.... It's

all a matter of peacefully trying to resolve the matter."

Marshall said Wednesday afternoon that protesters have allowed "a handful" of trucks carrying essential goods to cross the border after speaking with police.

Police don't have a timeline or plan around when they would step in to shut the protest down and make arrests, Marshall said.

A provincial spokesperson for the Department of Environment confirmed in an email Wednesday that border liaison officials are checking travelers forms as people come through the checkpoint.

'Irony in blocking highway'

Rankin, speaking at a funding announcement in Lunenburg, N.S., said he was "not yet" planning to try to get an injunction to stop the protest. In May, the province went to court to [stop people from gathering for protests](#) the day before a large anti-mask rally was planned in Halifax.

The order that allowed police to arrest and detain individuals breaking gathering limits [has since been lifted](#) and it's being challenged by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, who [say it was unconstitutional](#).

Rankin also said he hoped people recognize "the irony in blocking a highway that they want open."

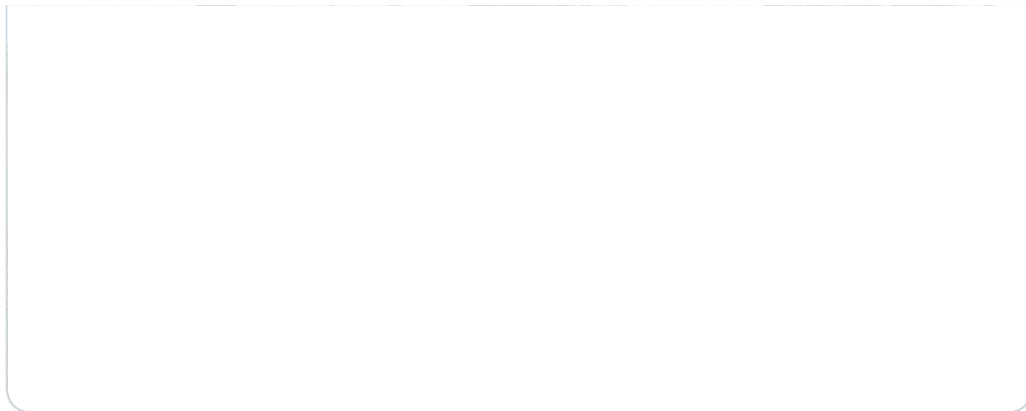
Brett Ruskin 

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Tense moment as some NB/NS border protesters try to block a truck because they believed it was delivering vaccine doses to Nova Scotia vaccination clinics. Other protesters tell them that it's a "blood truck", transporting blood to hospitals.

[Watch on Twitter](#)



11:26 AM · Jun 23, 2021



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In another incident, a protester grabbed a vehicle going through a field and around the blockade. The protester let go and rolled in the grass.

Among the protesters were several people who expressed anti-vaccine sentiments.



Nova Scotia RCMP said additional resources were heading to the border Wednesday morning. (Jonathan Villeneuve/Radio-Canada)

Jenn Moodie, who called vaccines "poison," was one of the people protesting and said she objected to "falsified information given to the public and the false promises."

She said the government should not be able to dictate where people go and she was prepared to stay as long as it took to get the message across.

"If the government can state we can't do these things against our Charter of Rights, we are going in protest to say, 'No, it's not acceptable.' You can't keep hanging a carrot in front of all of your people and then yanking the carrot away. You can't keep giving false promises. Lie after lie."

Brett Ruskin 
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Happening Now: The border between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia is blocked by protesters, angry that NS Premier Iain Rankin won't allow people from NB to enter without self-isolating. Rankin calls it too risky, with NB open to the rest of Canada for those with one COVID shot.

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Moodie said she wasn't personally affected by the border restrictions since her family is in Ontario, though she said she's been there eight times during the pandemic as she doesn't follow 14-day quarantine protocols when she returns to Nova Scotia.

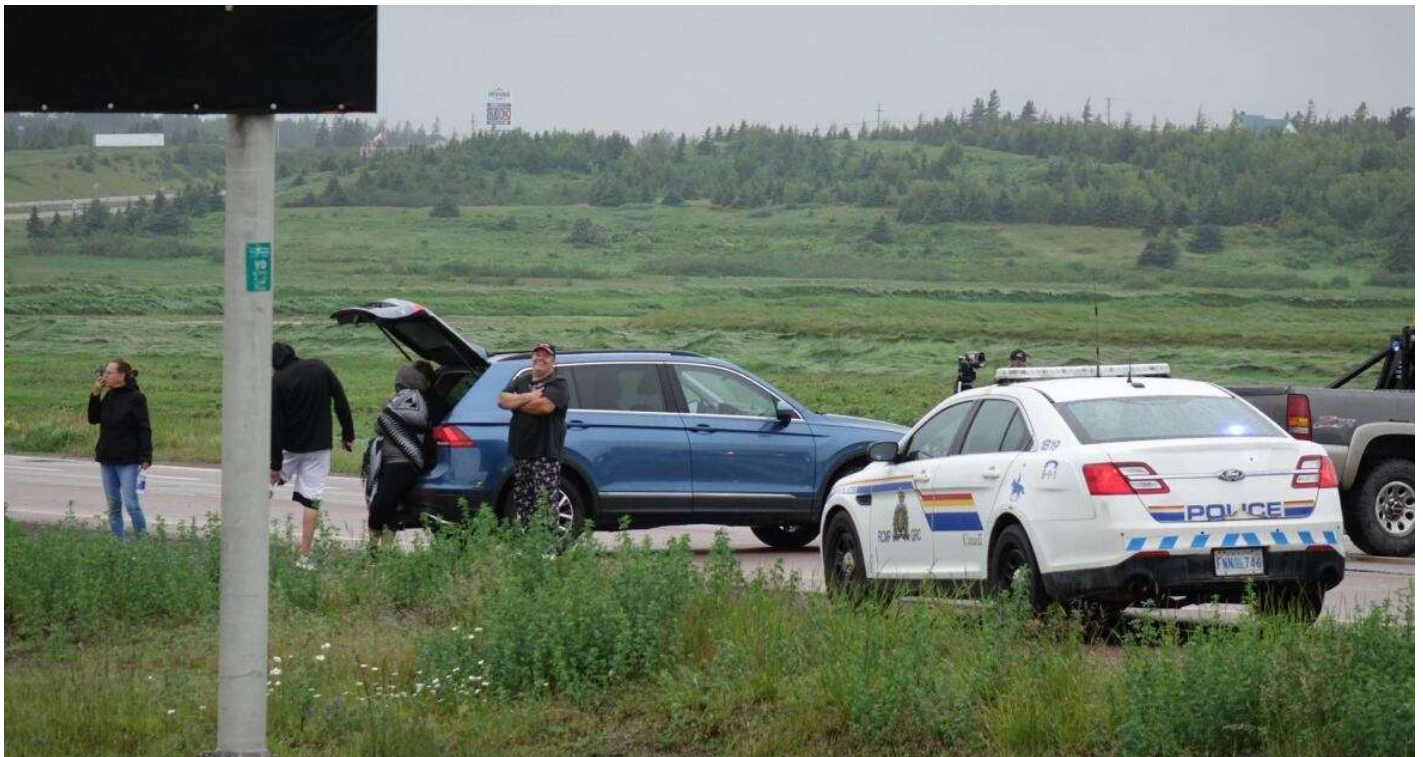
"I come and go. But unfortunately for here I know quite a few people that are going through a lot of mental health issues. A lot of kids who were looking forward to plans made, Airbnbs booked. Travel made."

'Really, really angry'

As a result of the border closure, the Nova Scotia Health Authority is advising that the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre is only providing essential services because health-care workers who live in New Brunswick aren't able to get to work.

David Kogon, the mayor of Amherst, told CBC's *Information Morning* the blockades "have shown that there's a significant number of people who are really, really angry that the Atlantic bubble that they were promised does not come to light."

"Families have been split apart for months and months and months and looking for that to finally come to an end today. And then at the last minute, the 11th hour, having that dashed? Extremely, extremely disappointing," he said.





People initially protested at Exit 7 of Highway 104 but then moved to a section of the Trans-Canada Highway along the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick border before midnight Tuesday. (Jonathan Villeneuve/Radio-Canada)

Kogon said he wants the governments of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to come up with a plan together so that everyone "feels they're being treated equally and fairly."

"It's the fact that they're not collaborating and working together to develop a plan that's acceptable to both the provinces. That's the disappointing thing to me," Kogon said. "We want to see a resolution."

Later in the morning, Rankin said he had spoken with Kogon and the mayor of Cumberland County about the public health concerns that motivated the decision to extend the isolation requirement.

MLA says she wasn't responsible for protest

Opposition PC MLA Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin, who represents the riding of Cumberland North, which borders New Brunswick, denied Wednesday she was responsible for the protest and road closure, instead blaming Rankin.

"He changed the rules at the 11th hour and he's impacting people's lives unnecessarily," she said.





Gary Stein is one of the dozens of tractor trailer-drivers stranded near Aulac, N.B. He is transporting vehicles from Ontario to Nova Scotia and says the vehicles are for people who have moved to Nova Scotia. (Shane Magee/CBC)

On Tuesday, Smith-McCrossin posted on Facebook that "it's time to collectively show this government what we think as a border community. I will need people to stand in unity with me."

A few hours later, she said Rankin had until 4 p.m. Tuesday to change the restrictions, "or the residents of Cumberland are shutting down the Trans-Canada highway" until the quarantine requirements were lifted.

Smith-McCrossin told CBC News Wednesday that people contacted her to let her know they were going to be at the protest.

"I went and I stood with them. And my job as MLA is to represent the people that elected me. That's why people elect people — to stand with them and to be their voice. And that's what I am doing today."





Long-haul truck driver Justin MacCallum was stopped at Exit 7 on Highway 104 on Tuesday evening but made it through around 9 p.m. (Submitted by Justin MacCallum)

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With files from CBC's Information Morning, Paul Palmeter, Brett Ruskin, Jean Laroche, Louise Martin

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